

During Lent, with Holy Week coming closer and closer by the minute, I always find myself reflecting on the cast of characters that accompany Jesus to the cross and to his resurrection. Every year, the disciple that I return to and reflect the most on is Judas.

Judas, in the Christian culture, is the ultimate villain. His kiss on Jesus' cheek sealed the deal of the crucifixion, leading to the Son of God suffering a painful death. What I am constantly reminded of with Judas, is that his role was absolutely necessary for the new covenant. Without Judas, that chain of events would not have led our Christ to die on the cross for our sins. That's a really big hinge on salvation.

In Lenten programs during my Jr. High and High School years, we would do a reflection on the gospel that would ultimately lead to a Lenten program of a dramatic representation of Holy Week. Every year I played Judas. Every year I looked at his acts and tried to see why someone would do what he did. No matter what the theory, I saw Judas as a tragic hero rather than a villain. Some questions that would always crop up in my mind were:

- Did Judas really know the outcome of his actions?
- What if Judas expected Jesus to save himself on the cross to prove that he was the Messiah?
- Could Judas have been the closest to Jesus? That last question I keep thinking on, because, if I had to be betrayed for the benefit of the whole world, I wouldn't want just anyone to bear that action, but a close and trusted friend.

It's really easy to just make a villain out of Judas. Like with most of Christianity, I don't think that the easy way is the way we should proceed with Judas' acts. I think it is important to try and put ourselves in Judas' shoes. I know that there have been times when I have betrayed friends. I know there have been times when I have betrayed my own trust in God and the Holy Spirit to work in my life. How is that any different than Judas' story? Is it that we make him to be a villain to separate ourselves from thinking that there are things that we do that might be similar? Why is it that we easily relate to and forgive Peter for saving his own skin by denying that he knows Jesus and keep a grudge against Judas for essentially doing a similar awful thing?

If we are to fully live into forgiving others, we should begin by forgiving Judas. Maybe he knew exactly what would happen and maybe not, but his actions led to the fulfillment of the new covenant and for that we should be grateful.

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